

Report to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Planning and Cultural Services
Report submitted by: Head of Planning and Environment
Date Wednesday, 8 March 2017

Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:
Chorley Rural East
Oswaldtwistle
Rossendale West

West Pennine Moors SSSI. Notification under s28C of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:
Andrew Mullaney, Head of Planning and Environment, Tel: 01772 534190,
andrew.mullaney@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

Natural England has informed the County Council of the extension of the boundary of White Coppice Flush Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The boundary has been extended under section 28C of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, to include more land that is considered to be of special interest. The enlarged site is to be known as West Pennine Moors SSSI.

The County Council has the right to make objections and representations (including those supporting the changes) about the notification.

The biodiversity and recreational value of the West Pennine Moors has long been recognised and the County Council has worked extensively with a range of partners for the conservation and enhancement of the Moors.

The SSSI includes land on the register of common land held by the County Council.

80% of the new SSSI area in Lancashire has previously been identified as Biological Heritage Sites. The notification of the SSSI will add further protection to the area and will help to deliver the County Council's strategic outcomes of a good environment while providing opportunities for people to access and enjoy the countryside as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Planning and Cultural Services is requested to approve the County Council's support for the designation of the West Pennine Moors SSSI.

Background and Advice

The enlarged SSSI straddles the district and unitary authority areas of Chorley (2,199 ha.); Hyndburn (278 ha.); Rossendale (1,006 ha.); Blackburn with Darwen (3,412 ha.); Bolton (492 ha.); and Bury (275 ha.). A plan showing the area of the West Pennine Moors SSSI site is attached at Appendix 'A'.

There does not appear to be any (non-highway) County Council property within the SSSI.

The biodiversity value of the area is well known and has been formally recognised in the past through its identification as Biological Heritage Sites (or 'Sites of Biological Importance' in the Greater Manchester unitary authority areas). 80% of the SSSI in Lancashire and Blackburn with Darwen is currently identified as BHS.

9 BHS covering 450 ha. lie wholly within the SSSI. A further 59 BHS (extending to 6,070 ha.) are partially within the SSSI.

There is good public access to the land within the SSSI: Lancashire has 56 km of Public Rights of Way (PROW) within the site and 82% of the 3,483ha in the County area is Access Land. The SSSI includes 1,033 ha of common land from eight units registered on the Lancashire Commons Register held by the County Council.

The designation of the SSSI does have minor implications for the BHS system which is jointly managed by the County Council and Lancashire Wildlife Trust, and administered on their behalf by Lancashire Environment Record Network (LERN). Those BHS which fall within the SSSI boundary will require de-listing; where a BHS straddles the SSSI boundary the BHS partnership will need to determine the best course of action in respect of the remainder areas outwith the SSSI. All changes to the BHS register then need to be notified to the system users, including district and unitary authorities.

It is considered that the notification of the West Pennine Moors SSSI will help to deliver the County Council's strategic outcomes of a good environment while providing opportunities for people to access and enjoy the countryside as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Consultations

The County Councillor for Chorley Rural East has requested that the County Council supports the notification to reflect the efforts of local people who have worked for this outcome.

The Countryside Service suggested: the SSSI status may attract additional agri-environment funding to achieve favourable conservation status for the SSSI habitats. There may be potential implications for the County Council or landowners should any PROW maintenance/management issues negatively impact on the SSSI conservation status.

Implications:

Asset Management

There may be potential implications for the County Council should any PROW maintenance/management issues negatively impact on the SSSI conservation status. However, this will depend on the particular details of any particular maintenance/management issue and which highway authority powers are being used. This does not appear to have ever been a problem for the Council on other SSSI sites within Lancashire where public footpaths and bridleways cross the sites.

There are not believed to be any implications for the County Council as a consequence of the inclusion of common land within the SSSI.

There are no material financial implications for the County Council, and the nature conservation status of the site should not affect equality or legal access rights.

Risk management

If the County Council does not support the SSSI designation, and Natural England does not complete the designation, an opportunity to enhance the protection of Lancashire's natural environment will be lost, as will be the opportunity for residents and visitors to enjoy an enhanced natural environment.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
West Pennine Moors SSSI Lancashire, Bolton, Bury, Blackburn with Darwen. Notification under section 28C of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	17/11/2016	Mike Burke, Natural England, Second Floor, Arndale House, The Arndale Centre, Manchester, M4 3AQ

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A